

Terms of Reference for the ACALAN Language Commissions for Vehicular Cross-Border Languages (VXBLs)

The Commissions will, subject to regional peculiarities, undertake the following generic tasks.

Audits

During the first two years of their existence, the Commissions will organise baseline audits with respect to:

1. L1 and L2 proficiency of the relevant populations in the relevant VXBLs;
2. Quantitative and qualitative audits of availability of print and electronic media in the relevant VXBLs;
3. Availability of school textbooks and reference works in all disciplines as well as *belle lettres* in the VXBLs, and
4. Human resources, i.e., trained and competent applied linguists and language practitioners (especially translators and interpreters) in the VXBLs.

Research

The Commissions will initiate research in order to determine within the first three-year period:

1. Whether existing or potential harmonised orthographies are acceptable to the relevant speaker-community;
2. the priority official domains for use of the VXBLs, especially with respect to written communication;
3. the economic and social value of the VXBLs in facilitating international trade and distribution of goods and services;
4. essential research on harmonisation of Sign languages in the relevant VXBLs, and
5. the prioritisation of the development and application of human language technologies and ICTs with regard to the VXBLs.

Advocacy

The Commissions will initiate advocacy campaigns and events (including competitions and prestigious awards in different domains of use) in order to popularise the use of the VXBLs as working languages of the Regional Structures of the AU and of other international regional institutions. Observance of international days of linguistic significance such as International Mother Language Day (21 February), World Literacy Day (8 September) and Africa Day (25 May) would be important and appropriate occasions for major symbolical and media events.

In order to do this effectively, the Commissions will liaise closely with all the relevant regional media organisations as well as with NGOs and community-based initiatives working in this field.

The Commissions will at all times stress that the initial selection of VXBLs was occasioned by cost considerations and by the need to explore all the relevant

challenges in a pilot phase. Other VXBLs will be added in due course, as soon as ACALAN has acquired a systematic grasp of the planning and implementation issues entailed by this project.

An international database and network of all interested and relevant individuals, organisations and institutions will be established.

Costing

The Commissions will initiate the costing of each and every macro- as well as micro-project, event or initiative they undertake. This information is not only vital in order to provide the political leadership with the requisite hard facts for budgeting purposes; it will also facilitate implementation planning, time lines, the phasing-in of specific activities and institutions, avoidance of unnecessary expenditure and duplication and the planning of extension of the programme to other languages.

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